

FOREWORD TO VOLUME 2

The foreword to Volume 1, “A Man with a Mission,” tells the story of the six-volume Pendergast Series and is reprinted in this volume.

A Christian Cosmology studies the two books of God, the Bible and nature, to discern their consistent reading for our age. This volume, an expanded version of Volume 1, offers a framework of illuminating concepts of philosophy and theology, in which it develops in rich detail the author’s crystallized vision.

Richard Pendergast sees the world as a hierarchy of irreducible elements, the highest level being that of the Logos. From the search of ancient Greek philosophy for a unifying principle and its integration with Jewish thought in the Hellenistic era, he relates the emergence of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity and its study to the present day. Using scriptural sources, he makes explicit the concept of “incosmation,” preceding that of the Incarnation, and presents to us an immanent and transcendent Logos as head of the universe.

Volume 2 includes an analysis for the general reader of what science revealed in the twentieth century concerning the structure and origin of the world, described mainly by the theories of relativity and quantum mechanics. The book then moves on to biological evolution and the origin of the human race. Darwin’s theory, with the two basic factors of random mutation and natural selection, has become atheistic neo-Darwinism. Richard Pendergast speaks in terms of what he calls “modest” Darwinism, adding a third factor of purpose. This crucially important concept of modest Darwinism, meaning evolution with purpose, appears to be as yet unknown to a large segment of even the highly educated Christian public. It is, however, an integral part of the author’s coherent view of reality, the teleology of the cosmic hierarchy and of quantum mechanics.

An explanation here may be helpful. Chapter 2, on creation and evolution, identifies the source of what has become a serious misunderstanding, resulting from the 1982 Arkansas creation trial, with its implied message that religion and science are not related and that evolution has no purpose. When the state of Arkansas passed a law requiring a balanced treatment of so-called “creation-science” (a term based on a literal interpretation of Genesis) and evolution science in public schools, the American Civil Liberties Union brought suit. The law was struck down on January 5, 1982, with the blanket endorsement of neo-Darwinism. How could this happen? There are influential religious communities in the United States who believe the story of creation as told in Genesis, but the teaching of religion in public schools is illegal. The consequences of this event would become global, leading to the spread of confusion, including the rejection of the Intelligent Design movement, an example of modest Darwinism.

Ernan McMullin, a Catholic priest and noted scholar of the history and philosophy of science, commented about the trial:

From the Christian standpoint the whole affair was a tragedy from beginning to end. Creationists acted in defense of their religious beliefs, but they succeeded only in making religion and science seem mutually exclusive. They tried to force a false choice on public school students, an either-or that even the smallest comprehension [of the history of the concepts of creation and evolution] would have shown to be ill-considered. . . .

A particularly unfortunate consequence of this controversy is that the term “creationist” has been rendered unusable by ordinary Christians, Jews or Muslims in describing their own beliefs. Yet they believe in God as creator; they profess the faith that the universe is God’s handiwork. They are all thus “creationist” in the most basic sense. But they are forced to disavow the extravagant doctrine that its protagonists (and the U.S. media) have agreed to call “creationism.” The entire notion of creation has been rendered suspect by an ill-advised literalism that would already have seemed out of place in Augustine’s day.

Augustine, indeed, perceived the dangers to the Christian community of precisely the sort of suspicion that the proponents of “creation-science” have fostered. Often, he says, Christians who do not understand some point about the earth, or the distances of the stars, or the orbits of the planets, or the nature of stones, or the like, will attempt to make their point by arguing as if it were Christian doctrine. The worst, he goes on, is not that such persons will be laughed at but that the Scriptures themselves will be brought into disrepute.¹

The situation has become more serious even than McMullin predicted. A scientific theory of evolution that allows for teleology was conflated with this caricature of creationism and summarily dismissed, as has happened with Intelligent Design.

It is the genius of Richard Pendergast’s work that it opens the door to an intellectually honest and sound understanding of the world for our time and offers fresh insight into the meaning of Christian faith.

When Father Pendergast died in 2012, I assumed responsibility for the manuscripts he had left in my care. It is my privilege and joy to promote his message and to seek its wide distribution.

My “Editor’s Update on Intelligent Design” was included as an excursus in Volume 1. For greatest clarity, the updated material on biological evolution is reprinted in this volume as chapters 12–14.

In addition, as suggested by the publisher, to offer further clarification and insight into faith-science issues, I am preparing a companion volume based on a selection of my related work for an encyclopedia. To be released shortly, it is titled *From Information to Insight: Toward a Consistent Reading of Science and Faith*.²

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REFERENCES

1. Ernan McMullin, "Introduction: Evolution and Creation," in *Evolution and Creation*, ed. Ernan McMullin (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985), 1–56, here 47–48, citing Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram* 1.19, in Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, trans. and annotated by John Hammond Taylor, S.J., 2 vols., Ancient Christian Writers 41–42 (New York: Newman Press, 1982), 1:43.
2. Valerie Miké, *From Information to Insight: Toward a Consistent Reading of Science and Faith* (New York: Crossroad, forthcoming 2023).